

--30. (new) An article as recited in claim 17, wherein said absorbent core has a Flow Conductance Value of at least about $7 * 10^{-6} \text{ cm}^3$; and at least one of said first and second primary layer regions has a Liquid Wicking Value of at least about 38%.

--31. (new) An article as recited in claim 17, wherein at least one of said first and second primary layer regions has a Liquid Wicking Value of at least about 38%.

--32. (new) An article as recited in claim 17, wherein said absorbent core has a Combined Conductance-Wicking Value of at least about $14 * 10^{-6} \text{ cm}^3$.

--33. (new) An article as recited in claim 31, wherein said absorbent core has a Combined Conductance-Wicking Value of at least about $14 * 10^{-6} \text{ cm}^3$.

--34. (new) An article as recited in claim 32, wherein said absorbent core has a Conductance-Wicking Value of at least about $14 * 10^{-6} \text{ cm}^3$. --

Remarks

The description has been amended to conform it to the remainder of the specification. The claims have been amended to provide adequate coverage to Applicants' contribution to the art. The amendments are clearly supported by the original specification, particularly at page 3, lines 18-20; page 13, lines 24-32; page 22, line 31 through page 23, line 2; page 26, line 30 through page 27, line 9; page 34, lines 15-20; page 38, lines 4-34; and at original claim 4.

The present invention provides an absorbent article comprising a backsheet layer, a substantially liquid permeable topsheet layer, and an absorbent composite structure sandwiched between the backsheet and topsheet layers. The absorbent composite includes an absorbent core having a first superabsorbent containing primary layer region and at least a second, superabsorbent containing primary layer region. In particular aspects, at least one of the first and second primary layer regions can have a liquid wicking value of at least about 38%. In other aspects, at least one of the first and second primary layer regions includes a plurality of sublayers. Further aspects are set forth in the specification and claims.

In its various aspects, the present invention can provide an article having a more efficient absorbent structure which is thin with low bulk, has high absorbent capacity, and is resistant to leakage. The configurations of the invention can more fully utilize the total potential absorbent capacity of the absorbent structure and can more efficiently move and distribute acquired liquid away from the original intake area to more remote areas which can be located closer to the distal end regions of the absorbent structure. In addition, the structures of the invention can provide an ability to acquire an intake liquid at a rapid rate, and can maintain the desired intake rate after the absorbent structure has been wetted and has reached a significant portion of its potential, total absorbent capacity.

Claims 1, 4 and 6-8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,762,641 to Bewick-Sonntag et al. The rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the currently presented claims.

It is respectfully pointed out that Examples 1, 2 and 3 of Bewick-Sonntag et al. (e.g. at column 11, TABLE 1 thereof) correspond to Examples 1, 2 and 3 of EP 0 631 768 A1 of Plischke et al. (e.g. at page 10, Table 1 thereof). A photocopy of EP 0 631 768 A1 is enclosed for the Examiner's ready reference.

As indicated in Applicants' original disclosure at page 75, line 10 through page 76, line 20, it is believed by Applicants that Examples 5 through 7 in Applicants' disclosure are representative of the structures taught by Plischke et al. Accordingly, it is believed that Examples 5 through 7 in Applicants' disclosure would also be representative of the structures taught by Bewick-Sonntag et al.

Examples 5 through 7 in Applicants' disclosure show that the structures of these examples do not provide the combination of characteristics afforded by the structures of the present invention. Accordingly, it is believed by Applicants that Examples 5 and 7 in Applicants' disclosure also show that the structures taught by Bewick-Sonntag et al. would not provide the structures and combinations of features afforded by the present invention. As a result, it is readily apparent that the structures taught by Bewick-Sonntag et al. distinctively differ from the configurations called for by Applicants' presented claims. Additionally, it is readily apparent that the structures taught by Bewick-Sonntag et al. would not inherently provide the configurations called for by Applicants' claimed invention. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that Bewick-Sonntag et al. do not disclose or suggest the invention called for by Applicants' currently presented claims.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) are respectfully requested.

Claims 2-3 and 5 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. PATENT 5,762,641 to Bewick-Sonntag et al. The Examiner has recognized that Bewick-Sonntag et al. do not disclose the thickness or crotch width of the absorbent core. Nonetheless, the Examiner has rejected the claims on the basis that the additionally recited features would be an obvious matter of design choice. The Examiner's rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the currently presented claims.

It is respectfully submitted that a combination of small thickness and small crotch widths are of distinctive importance because the narrow, thin crotch dimensions provides lower crotch bulk, better fit, and better comfort. With conventional articles, however, absorbents with thin, narrow crotch dimensions have provided inadequate void volume and inadequate absorption properties. In contrast to conventional articles, however, the articles of the claimed invention are capable of providing desired levels of absorption properties even when the absorbent structures have thin, narrow crotch dimensions. The importance of the crotch size and the difficulties presented by the absorbents with thin, narrow crotch sizes are described in the original specification, particularly at page 9, line 34 through page 10, line 5; and page 12, lines 29-35. Accordingly, the modified configurations having the thickness and crotch width called for by the claims would not have been "obvious" to a person of ordinary skill because such modifications would ordinarily have been expected to excessively degrade the performance of the absorbent.

With regard to the size feature of the first layer, the relatively smaller first layer has distinctive importance because such size is better configured to operate as an intake layer. Excess liquid that might spread and move past the ends of the first layer can contact and be absorb by the high absorbency, second layer that extends beyond the smaller first layer.

It is, therefore, readily apparent that the features and configurations recited in Applicants' presented claims can afford distinctive advantages, and that the features are not a mere matter of engineering design choice. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that Bewick-Sonntag et al. do not disclose or suggest the configurations called for by Applicants' claimed invention. Bewick-Sonntag et al. do not provide a motivation for making the changes and modifications needed to synthesize Applicants' claimed invention.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are respectfully requested.

Claims 9-22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,562,645 to Tanzer et al. The rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the currently presented claims.

Tanzer et al. describe an article which includes at least one absorbent, fibrous web layer which is substantially non-hydroentangled. The fibrous web layer can have a basis weight of at least about 60 gsm, and a density of not more than about 0.25 gm/cc. The fibrous web layer can further have a peak geometric mean tensile strength of at least about 250 grams-force per centimeter of width, and can have a fiber content in which at least about 90 wt % of the fibers are composed of fibers having a fiber length of not more than about 0.4 inch (about 1 cm).

Tanzer et al., however, do not disclose or suggest an absorbent article having superabsorbent material in the configurations called for by Applicants' presented claims. For example, Tanzer et al. do not disclose or suggest an absorbent article having a superabsorbent material configured to provide the MAUL value or the Tau value called for by Applicants' claims. Neither do Tanzer et al. teach the distinctive configurations called for by other particular claims of Applicants. It is, therefore, readily apparent that Tanzer et al. do not disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are respectfully requested.

The prior art made of record and not relied upon has been considered pertinent to Applicants' disclosure. It is readily apparent that this art does not disclose or suggest Applicants' presently claimed invention.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of Applicants' claims, as amended, along with the newly presented claims are earnestly solicited.

Please charge any prosecutorial fees which are due to Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. deposit account number 11-0875.

The undersigned may be reached at: (920) 721-2435.

Respectfully submitted,

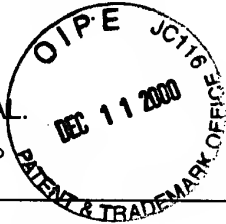
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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I, Barbara D. Miller, hereby certify that on December 5, 2000, this Amendment is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first-class mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.

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